

“SUMMARY SHEET”

Meeting: June 7-8, 2013, Commission Meeting

Agenda item 8: **Status of Southern Resident Killer Whales & Effect of Salmon Fisheries**

Staff Contact: Pat Pattillo, Special Assistant to the Director, Director’s Office

Presenter(s): Pat Pattillo, Special Assistant to the Director, Directors Office
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Background:

Southern Resident Killer Whales (SRKW; *Orcinus orca*) are listed as an endangered species under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA), the State of Washington, and the Species at Risk Act (SARA) in Canada.

In 2010, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) evaluated the Puget Sound Chinook Harvest Management Plan (Plan) developed by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife and the Puget Sound treaty tribes, and advised that recently available scientific information and analyses about the SRKW indicated that fisheries affecting chinook salmon may pose an unacceptable risk to the achievement of recovery for SRKW. Although NMFS found the Plan to be consistent with provisions of the Endangered Species Act, the Plan’s term was reduced to address SRKW related concerns with fisheries.

To further address these concerns NMFS developed a process for international scientific review of all technical information related to the effects of salmon fisheries on SRKW. Co-sponsored by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Canada, the process employed a panel of scientists independent of management agencies working with agency and management scientists to review scientific studies and analyses related to SRKW population dynamics, feeding behavior, and the abundance of salmon as key prey for SRKW. A series of three workshops were conducted to facilitate the science panel’s review, involving presentations and analyses by WDFW scientists and managers. The independent science panel completed a report of conclusions and recommendations in December of 2012.

In August, 2012, WDFW staff provided the Commission with a briefing on preliminary conclusions of the science panel on this topic with the expectation that the NMFS might use the science panel’s report to initiate or re-initiate consultations on fishery management plans under the Endangered Species Act, as necessary. NMFS has not taken such actions to date. NMFS representatives have agreed to present to the FWC an overview of the issues addressed in the science panel process. The purpose of this briefing is to provide an overview of the key issues of concern and discuss the potential implications of the scientific review process to the management of fisheries, Chinook salmon and SRKW.

Policy issues: Potential implications to management of Washington’s fisheries that affect Chinook salmon, possibly with an impact on prey available to Southern Resident Killer Whales.

Public involvement process and outcome: None

Action requested: None

Draft motion language:

N/A

Justification for Commission Action:

N/A

Communications Plan:

N/A
